Woodrow Wilson’s famous lament that extracurricular “sideshows” were perverting college life reflected the potency of the new student subculture. An autonomous, and sometimes underground, student life developed in the 1870s and 1880s at all four colleges, most spectacularly at Princeton. After 1890 the new subculture became remarkably standardized and pervasive across the four campuses. Student organizations proliferated. Students developed a romanticized version of life in which peer-group prestige outweighed academic prowess. The dominant ethos was to devote one’s emotional and physical strength to the organizations that constituted the “real” college world, and it devalued intellectual activity.1 Complaints like Wilson’s masked the extent to which adults and youths shared values and college authorities succeeded in co-opting the student culture.

Most student newspapers were cheerleaders for the student culture. With the founding of Bucknell’s Blue and Orange in 1897, students at all four colleges had weeklies. Except in the late 1890s when Swarthmore’s Phoenix was dominated by the administration, all four newspapers endorsed the emerging student culture and attacked attempts to regulate it. Students who failed to participate in activities were liable to criticism, sometimes by name. The mixed message was that students and campuses must be individualistic and competitive, but only within the accepted bounds of the student culture.

1. Wilson’s statement, truncated here, was in his article “What Is College For?” Scribner’s Magazine 46 (November 1909): 576. The actual passage is, “The side shows are so numerous, so diverting,—so important, if you will—that they have swallowed up the circus,...” The classic account of fin de siècle student life is Henry S. Canby, Alma Mater: The Gothic Age of the American College (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1936).
Coverage of formal student organizations constituted the bulk of reporting. These journals continued the same formats and themes that became popular in the 1880s. Stories on athletic contests dominated, and school spirit was the prevailing ethic. The four papers were remarkably similar in content and style throughout the period. Social and political issues were virtually ignored, even at the height of the Progressive Era.2

Intercollegiate athletics epitomized the fixation with highly organized extracurricular group activities and reinforced the male students' self-image as vigorous Christian gentlemen. In the 1890s and early 1900s, teams received financial support from young alumni, some of whom also acted as coaches. Successful teams no longer lived on a shoestring. Princeton's 1893 Thanksgiving Day football game with Yale, played in New York, attracted almost fifty thousand fans, while Swarthmore netted over thirteen hundred dollars from a game with the University of Pennsylvania.3 Bucknell's alumni-backed athletic association built a track and underwrote its first basketball team in the mid-1890s. Franklin and Marshall had its first full football season in 1890, and the following year alumni financed its first gymnasium. Baseball, track, and basketball joined football as permanent fixtures on these campuses.

Previously run solely by students, in the 1890s teams received coaching as well as financial assistance from recent graduates. Soon they were prosperous enough to hire professional coaches and trainers and plan extensive schedules with frequent travel for the major sports teams. Alumni backing gave the athletic associations considerable autonomy from college authorities.

In the 1870s and 1880s college faculty and presidents occasionally opposed athletic activities, sometimes over the objections of younger faculty. In the 1890s the new generation of college officials almost unanimously praised the positive effect of athletics on morality and fully subscribed to the ethos of the active life. Even skeptics granted


that sports diverted animal spirits to relatively innocuous uses. But by the turn of the century even the most boosterish educators were convinced that they had to rein in this runaway enterprise. At Princeton, for instance, Professor William Scott avidly defended athletics against McCosh’s criticisms only to discover decades later that many of the charges of cheating and professionalism had been true. An alarming number of gridiron deaths created nationwide demands for reform of that sport. Newspaper photographs of a bloodied Swarthmore player staggering off the field attracted national attention and convinced President Theodore Roosevelt to convene a conference to reform the game in 1905. The battered player, Robert “Tiny” Maxwell, played first for the University of Chicago. His Swarthmore tuition was paid by a wealthy young manager, Morris Clothier.4

At all four campuses, faculty standing committees were created to intervene in what had been initially a student and alumni arena. Princeton experimented with oversight committees in the 1880s; a permanent Committee on Outdoor Sports began regulating teams in the early 1890s. Bucknell’s faculty followed suit at the turn of the

century. By 1905 all four colleges had permanent faculty committees to oversee scheduling and other athletic matters that interfered with academic work. At Swarthmore, for instance, the athletic committee barred one of the stars from participating in the climactic game with Haverford due to academic deficiencies. President Swain had to defend the committee’s action before angry alumni. The following year Swarthmore issued rules on athletic eligibility requiring full-time attendance and adequate academic performance by all team members. Similar eligibility rules were soon established at the other colleges. College officials shared the students’ views on the value of athletics but were no longer willing to have it outside their oversight.5

Faculty committees were able to influence eligibility and scheduling because they impinged on academic life, but finances were more difficult to control. Purchasing equipment, arranging transportation, and hiring coaches were initially handled outside of college channels. The power of students and alumni in these areas had to be recognized and was eventually institutionalized through joint committees of faculty, alumni, and students. Princeton was the first to formalize this arrangement by creating the University Athletic Association in 1891. A general athletic treasurer replaced the student treasurer. At Bucknell the faculty was unable to control abuses until the board of trustees incorporated the fervent alumni into a reorganized athletic association, with an executive committee of three professors, two students, and two alumni, in 1911. In 1914 Franklin and Marshall created a Board of Control similar in composition and duties to those at Princeton and Bucknell. These groups hired the coaches, audited the financial records, and generally regulated athletics more closely than before.6

Intercollegiate athletics was institutionalized within a generally sup-

5. Joseph Swain to Morris Clothier, 10 November 1903, Swain Presidential Papers (Friends Historical Library); “Athletic Eligibility Rules of Swarthmore College 1904,” Swain Presidential Papers; Arthur S. Link, ed., The Papers of Woodrow Wilson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966–), vols. 7, 8. The faculty minutes are useful sources until regulation was delegated to committees. Only Swarthmore’s athletic committee records seem to have survived. Swarthmore College, Athletic Committee (later Advisory Board), Minutes (Friends Historical Library), 1911–17.

portive atmosphere. The moral objections frequently raised in the 1870s and 1880s were rare after 1890. A few misgivings were uttered by the denominations. The Presbyterian *New York Observer* reminded Princetonians that the men who graduated “before the passion for athletic superiority set in were not physical invertebrates.”

The *Messenger* criticized the emphasis on athletics at Reformed institutions like Franklin and Marshall. Other members of the denominations disagreed and supported intercollegiate athletics as a beneficial moral influence. As the opponents aged and denominational influence waned, college officials paid less attention to the complaints.

In one instance, however, a denominational objection had a hearing. Traditional Quakers were especially offended by the sporting craze, and a nearby Quaker rival, Haverford College, banned football in 1905; the ban lasted nearly a decade. The same year, local Quakers unsuccessfully petitioned Swarthmore “against the professionalism, demoralizing practices and excitement which seemingly have become a part of accompaniment to the game [football], making no avail the testimonies of our Society against wagering, the use of alcoholic liquors and the unfair and brutal treatment of fellow beings. It is unbecoming and improper on the part of any one, and especially of those claiming the name of Friend, to indulge in such practices.”

But three years later the Jeanes bequest (see Chapter 6), which offered money in exchange for the abolition of intercollegiate athletics at Swarthmore, was taken seriously. Although the bequest was eventually declined, it led to reforms. The college banned all intercollegiate contests for a year and formed the Swarthmore Athletic Committee, composed of three faculty members, two alumni, and a student. The committee transferred powers from student managers to a professional physical director, took over the hiring of coaches, limited team trips, and audited the financial records.

The resolution of the Jeanes controversy was in line with the practices at the other three

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10. Swarthmore, Athletic Committee, Minutes (Friends Historical Library), 31 January 1912, 5 June 1912, 11 December 1912, 9 April 1913; Swarthmore College, Athletic Advisory Board, 26 September 1913–13 June 1917.
Fig. 19. Swarthmore students "off to Haverford" for the annual football rivalry.

campuses. Intercollegiate athletics was accepted as an integral part of higher education, but it was formally brought under institutional control.

Important as football and other sports were to the student culture, athletics was just the most prominent part of the newspapers’ broader emphasis on activities. Campus journalism had a strong element of Babbittry; “joinerism” was rabidly promoted. Some articles promoted student activities in reverential tones. William Irvine personified the growing acceptance of student activities in religious circles. After graduating from Princeton he went to Lancaster Theological Seminary, where he captained Franklin and Marshall’s first successful football team as well as founding the college’s first weekly newspaper and glee club.\(^\text{11}\)

Like athletics, student religion developed formal organizations and intercollegiate connections. Religious groups at all four colleges affiliated with the YMCA. Bucknell's chapter, formed in 1882 to replace the old Society for Moral and Religious Inquiry, ran successful revivals in the late 1880s. It also participated actively in state YMCA activities, hosting the annual meeting of the collegiate division in 1903. The chapter sponsored speakers, Bible study groups, missionary and evangelistic campaigns, social events, and freshman orientation. In 1912 the YMCA was able to hire a full-time secretary. Cleverly, the organization printed cards with the schedule of football games on one side and prayer meetings on the other.12

Princeton's YMCA chapter, the Philadelphian Society, engaged in similar activities, particularly emphasizing foreign missions. Several Princeton graduates were national leaders in the Student Volunteer Movement, and Princeton sent large delegations to the annual meetings. In 1906 the Philadelphians established a permanent missionary school in Beijing, partially staffed by recent alumni. There was a noticeable increase in service activities in the latter years of the Progressive Era. In the 1910s the Philadelphians ran a night school for university employees, the Dorothea House for recent Italian immigrants, and a Town Club and two Boy Scout troops for area youth, as well as providing a Sunday school and speakers for local church groups. About twenty undergraduates also ran an annual summer camp for urban children at the New Jersey shore. In all, about 150 students annually participated in these activities.

About two-thirds of Princeton's students belonged to the Philadelphian Society. Weekly talks on religious and social issues by faculty and alumni were well attended. While few students embraced evangelical piety and formal church services were not popular, student-run religious organizations that fit the optimistic muscularity of the student culture did well. In 1891 the Philadelphians hired a full-time general secretary; by 1919 the administrative machinery included four professional full-time workers, a Graduate Advisory Committee of alumni, and a student committee with access to the university.

12. Bucknell University, YMCA, Minutes (Bucknell University Archives), 1882–1916; Bucknell University, YMCA, Papers (Bucknell University Archives), 1901–8; John H. Harris, Thirty Years as President of Bucknell with Baccalaureate and Other Addresses (Washington, D.C., 1926), 74–75.
president. Smaller groups engaged in similar activities at Franklin and Marshall and at Swarthmore. Religious enthusiasm had become a well-organized activity, often dominated by future ministers.

Literary societies enjoyed a brief renaissance in the 1890s and early 1900s before slipping permanently into a peripheral role. Theta Alpha at Bucknell added guest speakers and musical programs, and the annual debate with the rival Euepians was a major campus event. But by 1907 weekly attendance was down to fifteen, and both societies soon died out. Several students formed the competing Demosthean Club in 1899, using a literary format and meeting in a classroom. In 1905 they moved to a private room in Lewisburg, but within a year the social function overshadowed the literary, and the organization became the Delta Sigma fraternity. The *Mirror*, Bucknell's literary magazine, also faltered and published its last issue in May 1906, not to be replaced until the 1920s. Revivals of the literary societies in 1912 and 1916 were short-lived.

At Princeton, intercollegiate debating briefly revived the Whig and Cliosophic societies. Annual debates with Harvard and Yale attracted large crowds in the 1890s, but these spectacles lost popularity after the turn of the century. As eating clubs became more popular enrollment in the societies dropped, despite the faculty's offer of prizes and academic credit for work done in them. Bringing outside speakers to the campus became their major function, and the halls barely survived, finally merging in the 1920s. One alternative literary activity was the *Nassau Literary Magazine*, which enjoyed some brilliant years under Edmund Wilson's editorship shortly before World War I.

At Swarthmore the activities of the societies included the standard readings, speeches, and debates. For instance, on 17 March 1891 the future attorney general, A. Mitchell Palmer '91, presented the affirmative side of the resolution "that the American cabinet system is preferable to the English." The Delphics and the Eunomians contin-

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ued to function effectively for another decade, but after 1905 their meetings became sporadic and increasingly relied upon story-telling. Literary interests shifted to producing a literary supplement for the campus newspaper.  

The authorities at Franklin and Marshall made the most concerted effort to save the literary societies. The trustees were so distressed by decreasing student participation in the 1890s that they ordered the faculty to assign extra work to students who failed to join the societies, an order the faculty carried out for four years before begging for relief from the burden. Mock trials inspired a revival after the turn of the century. Even though the Goetheans and the Diagnosthians retained their libraries and meeting rooms until 1919, they lost members to other activities and became small, selective groups. However, their monthly, the *College Student*, was revived after 1900. A faculty-dominated journal in the 1880s and a more typical student publication in the 1890s, it became a serious student literary magazine.

in the 1900s.\textsuperscript{17} Franklin and Marshall, Princeton, and Swarthmore each experienced a literary renaissance around 1910, with activities focusing on a specialized journal rather than the broad-based literary societies of the previous century.

In marked contrast to the plight of the literary societies, fraternities grew rapidly. Although such groups had existed since the 1860s, in the 1890s and 1900s they achieved a new affluence as wealthy alumni financed expensive houses and membership lists expanded. Fraternities (or eating clubs at Princeton) traditionally made arrangements with boardinghouses for meals, and rented meeting rooms. In the 1890s some fraternities purchased houses with alumni help. As the social and financial power of fraternities rose, college authorities sought more control over their actions. At Bucknell the faculty voted to prevent students from pledging until they had completed freshman year in good standing. At Swarthmore the faculty banned social functions on any night except Saturday, but the fraternities rented rooms in the village and carried on. Although Woodrow Wilson's bid to transform the eating clubs into a college system failed (see Chapter 6), the trustees allowed him to limit participation by freshmen and sophomores.\textsuperscript{18} As with athletics, the faculties limited the most extreme abuses but could not make intellectual activities the center of student life.

Musical and dramatic groups also flourished, with glee clubs and mandolin clubs being particularly popular. The most visible group was the Princeton Triangle Club, whose forerunners had been squelched by Presbyterian sensitivities among trustees and faculty in the 1870s and 1880s. The club’s musical farces prospered after a very successful 1893 production written by student Booth Tarkington. The faculty denied the club’s request to go on tour in 1893 but relented in 1897, beginning a tradition of annual winter tours. In

\textsuperscript{17} Franklin and Marshall College, Board of Trustees, Minutes (Franklin and Marshall Archives), June 1896, June 1900; Brubaker, 52–53; Klein, 201; Henry J. Young, \textit{Historical Account of the Goethean Literary Society, 1835–1940}, Franklin and Marshall College Studies, no. 3 (Lancaster, Pa., 1941), 55–56; Samuel Ranck, “The Literary Societies . . . ,” \textit{Reformed Church Review} 7 (1903): 243–54; \textit{College Student} 11–36 (1890–1915); Franklin and Marshall College, Faculty, Minutes (Franklin and Marshall Archives), 1912–13, p. 152–74.

1900 the club opened its season in Carnegie Hall. The addition of a business staff increased organizational efficiency, and a graduate board institutionalized alumni support. At Franklin and Marshall, the glee club started by William Irvine regularly took to the road. At Bucknell, students started clubs in chess, French, German, and professional areas while a dramatic group, an orchestra, a glee club, and a band prospered. Student yearbooks, which became popular publications in the 1890s, gave work to local photographers and memorialized the organizations.

College authorities, recognizing students’ growing self-sufficiency and organizational proficiency, began to enlist their assistance in regulating college life. The committees for regulating athletics were the first manifestation of this strategy, which then was applied to other areas of student conduct. At Bucknell, President Harris appointed a Senior Council composed of seniors from the fraternities and two nonfraternity members to help govern the students, though he retained the ultimate power “to request the quiet withdrawal of any student he may regard, for moral reasons, undesirable.” At Franklin and Marshall, President Apple consulted with students before changing policies pertaining to campus social life and created several joint student-faculty-administration committees in the 1910s. Wilson regularly consulted a Senior Council at Princeton. At Swarthmore, President Swain used fraternity leaders to improve discipline and impose peer pressure on errant students. The evolution of the school rule against the use of tobacco demonstrates the changing strategy. Every year until 1906 the catalog stated that students must abstain. With the creation of a student-faculty committee on smoking, this rule was dropped from the catalog. Yet the ban remained in practice, and student committee members militantly supported the ban.

Honor systems were the strongest expression of the new trust in students. Princeton created one in 1893 when students decided that proctoring of examinations affronted their dignity and requested the right to regulate cheating. The faculty agreed to delegate primary responsibility to a student board. A decade later, Franklin and Marshall also instituted an honor system.

Most students were more interested in having the freedom to devote themselves to activities than in participating actively in college governance. Once released from the most onerous restrictions of in loco parentis, most students accepted established values. Their sense of institutional pride and corporate effort also encouraged them to accept most rules. The student press viciously attacked students who endangered the institution’s name; students were apparently more concerned with their dignity than with replacing the value system. The student ethos demanded conformity. A student complained to Woodrow Wilson that, to be accepted socially, a student “can’t be broad, or he will be thought queer; he can’t entertain ideas much in advance of, or much different from those generally entertained by the student body, or his social aspirations will have vanished forever.”

One disciplinary problem, hazing, was intensified by the new student culture, which thrived on intense class loyalties. Princeton faculty, for instance, were confronted with protests from seniors whose honor was insulted by their having to sit with sophomores in chapel. At all four campuses more or less violent hazing vexed deans and faculties, but the student press consistently defended all except the most dangerous practices as a necessary and proper part of college life.

6 and 1906–7; Swarthmore College, Executive Committee, Minutes (Friends Historical Library), 5 January 1905; Robert C. Brooks to Robinson, 16 February 1906, Faculty Papers (Friends Historical Library).
26. Link, Papers of Wilson, 8:51, 384–95, depicts the Princeton faculty dealing with a severe outbreak of hazing in 1893. Student newspapers are filled with accounts of
Although evangelical piety no longer set the campus tone after 1890, conventional religiosity was expected. Swarthmore's board of managers required all students to attend the campus Friends meeting on Sundays even after the proportion of Quakers in the student body had dipped below 40 percent. In 1906 the managers finally permitted students of other denominations to attend Sunday services at local churches, but they continued to require daily attendance at the morning campus services. Princeton, where a majority of students favored some compulsory chapel, halved its chapel requirements in 1912. Bucknell's chapel could not accommodate the expanding enrollment, so students were required to attend Sunday service in the local church of their choice. Required weekday-morning chapel services continued until 1919, but because all students could not be accommodated absences were not only overlooked but necessary. Only Franklin and Marshall remained small enough to require daily prayer meetings and on-campus Sunday chapel services for the whole student body.27

Enforcement of official regulations depended on the ability to house all students on campus. Only Swarthmore provided all students with dormitory rooms throughout the period. It continued a vestige of Quaker guarded education, admitting no more students than there were beds except for a few “townies” who lived at home. Required daily social hours and religious services guaranteed considerable faculty oversight of activities; they only escaped when fraternities and other social groups rented rooms in the village. When Bucknell expanded in the 1890s, the proportion of men in rooming houses and fraternities increased; women were required to live on campus or at home. As dormitories were constructed after the turn of the century, more men were drawn to campus by low prices. By 1910 only thirteen seniors lived off campus.

The all-male colleges were less concerned with providing housing. Construction of four neo-Gothic dormitories during Wilson's presidency still left some Princeton students off campus. In 1920 Princeton could only accommodate about two-thirds of its eighteen hundred students in the dormitories and dining halls. Franklin and Marshall tore down Harbaugh Hall, its only dormitory and dining hall, in

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27. Swarthmore College Bulletin 3 (March 1906); Nassau Herald, 1895 and 1905; Harris, Thirty Years, 75-76; Oliphant, 239; Bucknell University, Catalogue, 1900-1901 to 1917-18; Franklin and Marshall, Catalogue, 1919-20, pp. 32-33.
1900, leaving the students to live in boardinghouses and dine in off-campus eating clubs until the 1920s.28

Conflicts between students and college authorities declined as rules enforcing Victorian life-styles were relaxed. As fraternities and athletics became popular, student tastes ended attempts to impose the "plain life" at Swarthmore and its less demanding equivalents at the other campuses. Student newspapers applauded administrators like Dean Bond at Swarthmore and President Wilson at Princeton when they eliminated restrictions on student life. At Bucknell, President Harris prohibited dances, but fraternities held them off campus. In 1919 Harris's successor liberalized the social rules. Off-campus clubs and fraternities at Princeton and at Franklin and Marshall enabled

Fig. 21. The "Jolly Bummers" eating club at Franklin and Marshall, 1893.

students to escape many of the rules that remained on the books.\textsuperscript{29} The colleges were developing mechanisms to regulate student behavior more systematically within less Victorian guidelines. The requisite dormitories, dining halls, and administrators completed the system in the 1920s and made the remaining rules more enforceable.

"Democracy" was a common rhetorical theme in college writing. Democracy existed in the sense that success in extracurricular activities could offset parental wealth in establishing student prestige. A Princeton student's complaint that "democracy applied, with but few exceptions, only to athletics" suggests one limit on collegiate democracy.\textsuperscript{30} Another was that collegiate democracy existed within institutions that did not reflect the ethnoreligious, racial, gender, or class heterogeneity of American society.

Class pictures reveal no black faces and class rosters contain few names indicative of the "new immigration." There is little firm evidence that the homogeneity was enforced by overt prejudice rather than by social customs and expectations. Only the extensive records of Woodrow Wilson’s presidency at Princeton reveal active discrimination. Wilson could usually rely on African-Americans not applying. When one tried, Wilson advised him that it was "inadvisable for a colored man to enter Princeton."\textsuperscript{31} Edwin Slosson, in his 1910 classic \textit{Great American Universities}, accused Princeton of being the only major university that excluded blacks. In reference to Asian students, Slosson sarcastically noted that "the Princeton students, I believe, support some of their graduates as missionaries among the Chinese, but apparently they do not like to have them around."\textsuperscript{32} An earlier president, James McCosh had been more tolerant, defending the right of a black Princeton Theological Seminary student to attend his psychology course against undergraduate protests.\textsuperscript{33}

Few records of student religious affiliation have survived. Those

\textsuperscript{29} Homer D. Babbidge, Jr., "Swarthmore College in the Nineteenth Century: A Quaker Experience in Education" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1953), 189–200; Warfel, 6–35; Franklin and Marshall, \textit{Catalogue}, 1911–12; \textit{Phoenix} 23 (1902–3).

\textsuperscript{30} Chambers to Wilson, Wilson Papers.


\textsuperscript{33} Synnott, 174–76.
that were kept were rarely made public. To judge from the names, it appears that few Catholics and Jews were enrolled at any of the four campuses. Princeton yearbooks recorded Catholic enrollment rising from 2 percent to 6 percent between 1900 and 1915, with Jewish enrollment remaining at 1 percent. Again, only the extensive records of Wilson’s administration provide firm evidence of anti-Semitism. Although Wilson did not share the common prejudice against Jews, Princeton’s homogeneity was consciously cultivated by others. Policies at other campuses are not revealed in the surviving records. Scattered evidence suggests that many, probably most, students shared the standard Protestant prejudices toward non-Protestants and nonwhites. There is no evidence that students were concerned with denominational differences among Protestants. Even ardently religious students channeled much of their energy into YMCAs and other interdenominational Protestant groups.

The students were also drawn from a limited geographic range. Even Princeton was surprisingly regional. From 1890 to World War

34. Ibid., 177–89; Slosson, 105; J. Ridgway Wright to Woodrow Wilson, 16 September 1904, Wilson Papers, box 32; Nassau Herald, 1905, p. 94, and 1915, pp. 45–290.
I, about two-thirds of its students came from the Middle Atlantic states, a higher proportion than in antebellum days. Swarthmore, with a large contingent from the border states and the Midwest, was only slightly more dependent on the region. It drew about three-quarters of its students from the Middle Atlantic states in the 1890s, a proportion that increased to over 80 percent by World War I. Well over 80 percent of Bucknell students and 90 percent of Franklin and Marshall students were Pennsylvanians. The regionalism of the student bodies remained surprisingly stable throughout the period. None of the colleges broadened its geographical distribution, and Swarthmore became more parochial. Neither improved transportation nor the decline of regionally distinct culture translated into a broader geographic appeal.

The age range also narrowed. The elimination of academies at Bucknell and Swarthmore left only Franklin and Marshall with that clientele on campus by 1917. Young collegiate students in their mid-teens and “mature” students in their late twenties also largely disappeared from the campuses. The increasingly age-specific transitions on the road to adulthood sharpened student sensitivity to having younger or older students in their midst.

The colleges’ approaches to coeducation of the sexes differed dramatically. Swarthmore was founded as a coeducational college, and its status was never an issue. The only controversy was over how strictly to monitor contact between the genders. Bucknell, which had a female institute for several decades, admitted women into college classes in 1884. President Harris eagerly promoted coeducation. He lauded the women’s academic conscientiousness and created some sex-specific curricula to attract more female students. Both Franklin and Marshall and Princeton remained all-male after some ambivalence. In 1894 the Franklin and Marshall faculty urged that the college accept women; the trustees rejected the idea. Princeton shared its library and some faculty with newly founded, nearby Evelyn College for women for a decade but rejected formal affiliation; Evelyn

35. I have defined the Middle Atlantic states as New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Slosson, 105.
College collapsed in 1897. Woodrow Wilson believed that coeducation "vulgarizes the whole relationship of men and women" and as president made no effort to revive the experiment. 37

Prudes like Wilson would have been comforted by the fact that male student life, at least as reflected in student publications, did not differ significantly between the coeducational and single-sex institutions. At Swarthmore and Bucknell athletics and fraternities provided a male-centered social life. Men held most offices in major organizations. For instance, no woman was president of Swarthmore's senior class until the wartime absence of males enabled Mary Wilson to lead the class of 1919. The appointment of deans of women institutionalized the separate spheres. The presence of women at Swarthmore and Bucknell neither "feminized" student culture as much as critics of coeducation feared nor civilized it as much as supporters hoped. Wilson spoke for many in a national backlash against coeducation in the "Progressive" Era. 38

Collegiate rhetoric about democracy carried the same connotations of homogeneity and conformity in college life as it did in the dominant group in American society. College records provide no systematic evidence of student class origins, but it is clear that almost all students were white Protestants of northern European descent. Most students did not share their parents' strong identification with ethnoreligious groups within Protestantism. Instead, the student culture reflected the breadth and the prejudices of the emerging, broadly Protestant upper-middle-class culture. Rhetoric about collegiate democracy disguised more than it revealed.


Unlike in preceding decades, in the 1890s college authorities essentially shared students' belief in the active life. Although after 1900 they worried more about the frivolous and anti-intellectual side of this life and attempted to regulate the abuses, most still looked positively on activities. Intercollegiate athletics particularly attracted praise from alumni and the presidents, although some faculty dissented. John Harris of Bucknell was undoubtedly the most sanguine; he said that his heart never failed “to warm to the young giants who risk life and limb on the field of strife for the glory of alma mater. This intense struggle for glory other than their own cannot fail to have a beneficial effect upon those who take part in the game.”

Most agreed that athletics lessened the attractiveness of drinking, smoking, and other sensual vices. In the age of Teddy Roosevelt vigor was the order of the day. President Swain told a conference of Friends that there was “as much evil wrought in the world from weakness as from wickedness,” and that without vigor life’s affairs did not “look roseate and hopeful as they should.” At Franklin and Marshall, President Stahr attributed improved discipline to football victories and a successful glee club. At Princeton a number of professors attended football practices, and guests at the team’s annual banquet included professors, trustees, and influential alumni. President Patton opined that “out of these brawny contests some of the very best elements of manhood may emerge.” Woodrow Wilson defended football in public debate against a University of Pennsylvania professor and frequently stressed its contributions to building moral character, manliness, and self-denial.

A few, such as Franklin and Marshall professor Jefferson Kershner, rejected such hyperbole. He maintained that “moral training comes from the serious things of life and not from play and sport.” Kershner pointed to the paradox that intellectual work was more like the work of later life, yet in comparison with athletics it was disparaged as of little use in preparation for “real life.” Such dissent failed to deflate

39. Harris, Thirty Years, 523.
41. Franklin and Marshall, Trustees, 17 June 1890.
42. Francis L. Patton, Speech: March 1, 1888 (New York: Princeton Club of New York, 1888). For signs of faculty interest, see Link, Papers of Wilson, 8:204, 415.
43. Link, Papers of Wilson, 8:449–50, 482–84.
the romanticism of colleagues like President Apple, who had played on the college's first football team and who believed strongly in the “making of the man” through active participation in student organizations. Swarthmore's President Swain even said that the social graces cultivated by fraternities “should be the possession of every cultivated man or woman, even if secured at the expense of somewhat lower marks in classroom work.”

The presidents became more ambivalent by about 1910. President Apple reported to the Franklin and Marshall trustees that students' behavior had improved greatly, but that they were insufficiently studious and that a student who was successful in the extracurriculum was “likely to lose his head.” Swarthmore's President Swain urged fellow presidents “to emphasize more standards of scholarship and curtail outside activities.” Woodrow Wilson's lamentations about “sideshow” and his attack on the eating clubs were prominent examples of a widespread reconsideration of student life. Between 1870 and 1917, college authorities had gone from concern about the spreading contagion of vice, to naive faith in student organizations as reform agents, to a revised in loco parentis based on administrative control of student organizations and residential life.

The prevailing student ethic was that a college was a community that had a moral and a social as well as an intellectual side, and that the organized expressions of this community took primacy over the concerns of individuals. At the end of this period and on the eve of the 1920s, a decade in which student culture received national attention, Franklin and Marshall's Student Weekly expressed (with some hyperbole) the spirit of muscular Christianity. If you did not feel ashamed to miss a mass meeting or to fail to be in the cheering section, the Weekly asserted, then you were a “plain, ordinary slacker and you don't belong here.”

45. Swain, “Utilization,” 34.
Underneath this dominant ethos there were ironies and dissent. The rhetoric of “real life” and “democracy” hid virtually the opposite: many students reveled in the frivolous and isolated themselves from the heterogeneity of American society. They lived on campuses with Gothic architecture and medieval ceremonies that denied the modernity of the society in which they were going to have leading roles. Conformity to the dominant style was enforced in the name of rugged individualism. Not all students conformed to the dominant ethos; college life was not “this side of paradise” for everyone. But for those within the charmed circle, it was a heady experience. Students at these campuses were among the first to experience a privileged and romantic college life-style that attracted affluent Americans by seeming to preserve traditional values while participating in their destruction.